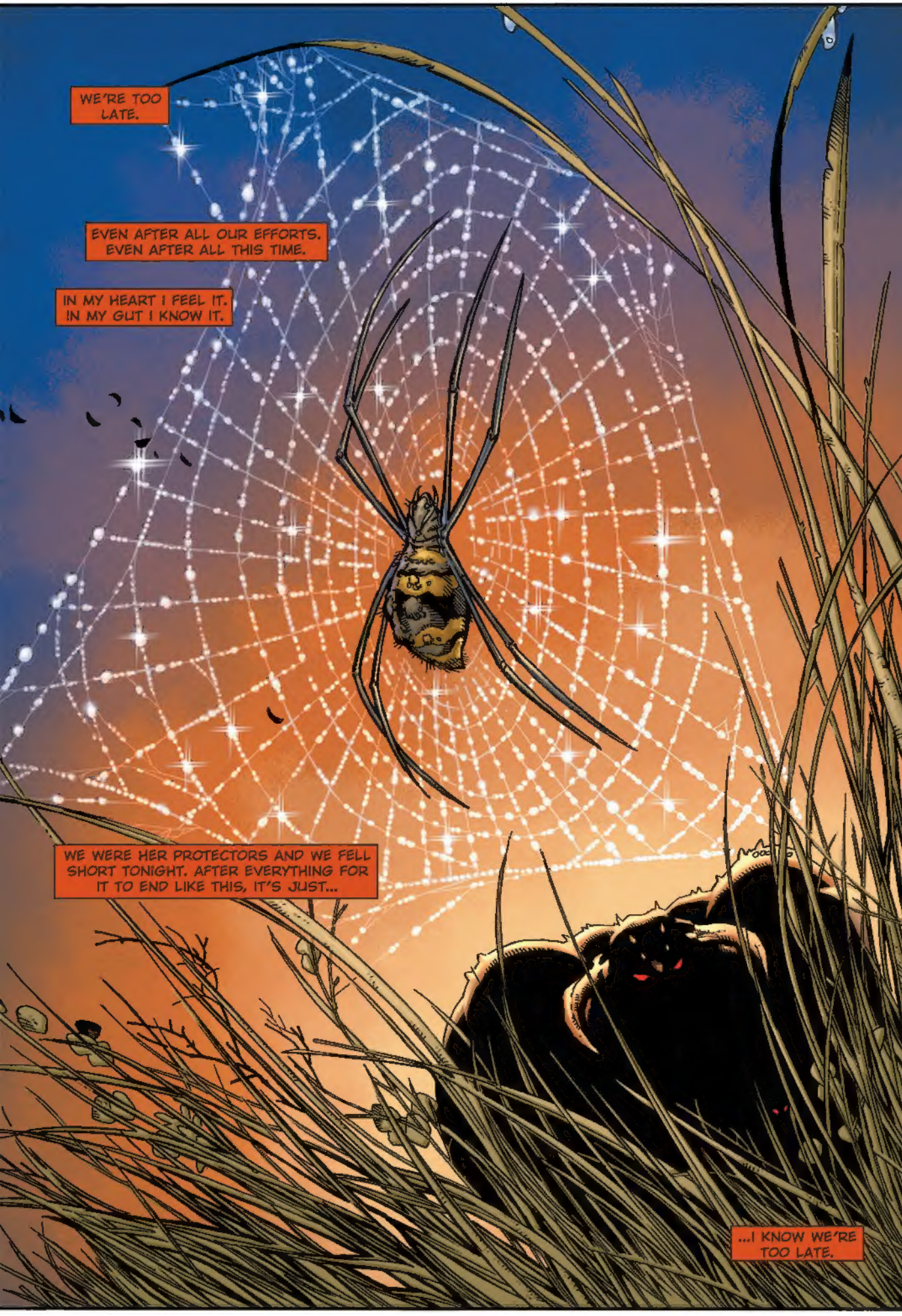
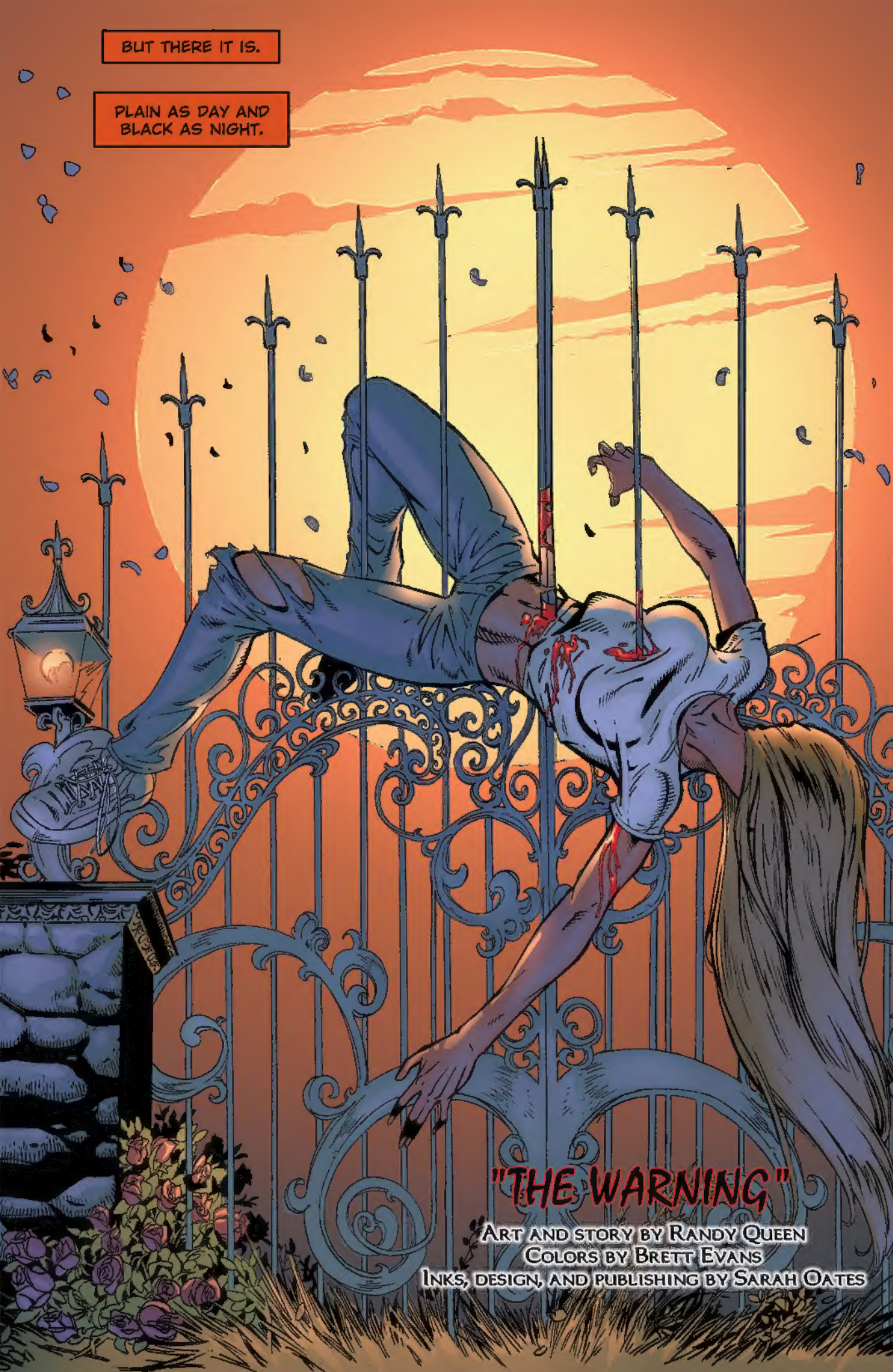
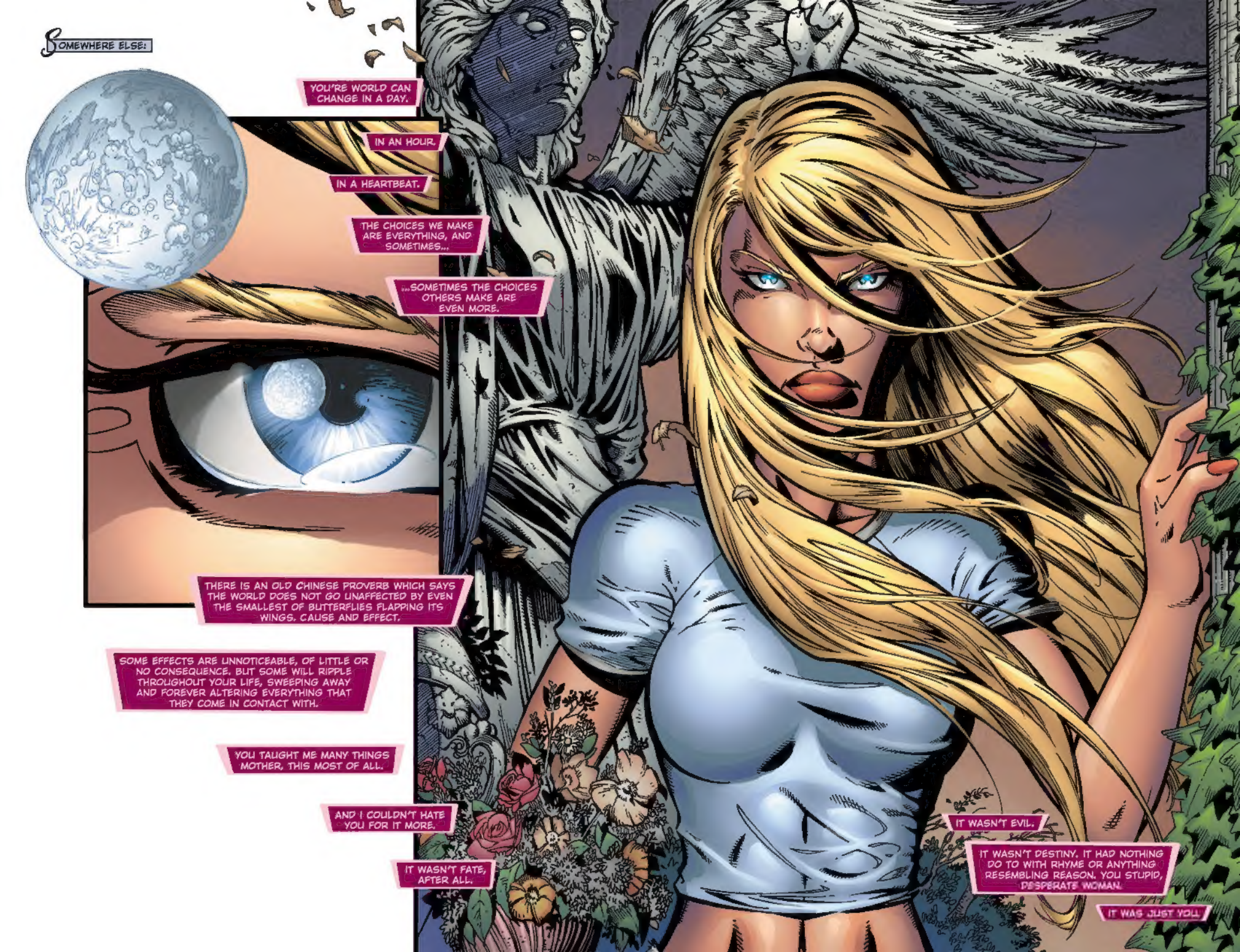
DARKCHYLDE

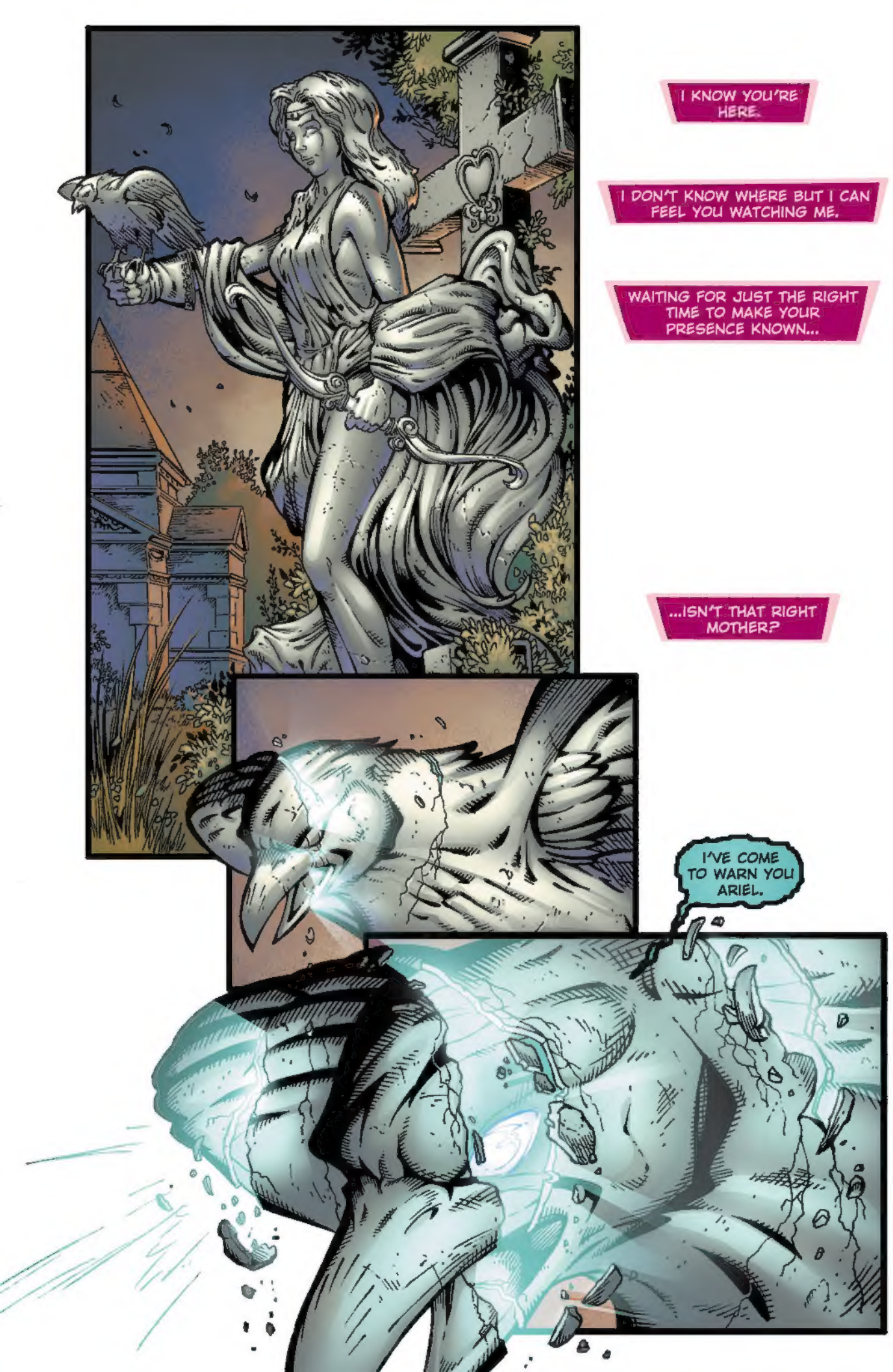

WE'RE TOO LATE.
EVEN AFTER ALL OUR EFFORTS. EVEN AFTER ALL THIS TIME.
IN MY HEART I FEEL IT. IN MY GUT I KNOW IT.
WE WERE HER PROTECTORS AND WE FELL SHORT TONIGHT. AFTER EVERYTHING FOR IT TO END LIKE THIS, IT'S JUST...
...I KNOW WE'RE TOO LATE.

BUT WE'LL TRY.
WON'T MAKE A BIT OF DIFFERENCE, THOUGH. IT ENDED HOURS AGO AND THIS IS JUST US GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS, PAINFUL AS IT IS.
SHOULD HAVE NEVER LEFT HER ALONE. NO WAY. NOT IN THE CONDITION SHE WAS IN. BUT WE DID ANYWAY SO I GUESS THIS IS WHAT WE DESERVE.
AND WHEN I FINALLY SEE THE SICKENING TRUTH... LAID OPEN AND BLEEDING BEFORE ME, IT STILL DOESN'T REGISTER.
NO!!!


BUT THERE IT IS.
PLAIN AS DAY AND BLACK AS NIGHT.
"THE WARNING"
ART AND STORY BY RANDY QUEEN
COLORS BY BRETT EVANS
INKS, DESIGN, AND PUBLISHING BY SARAH OATES

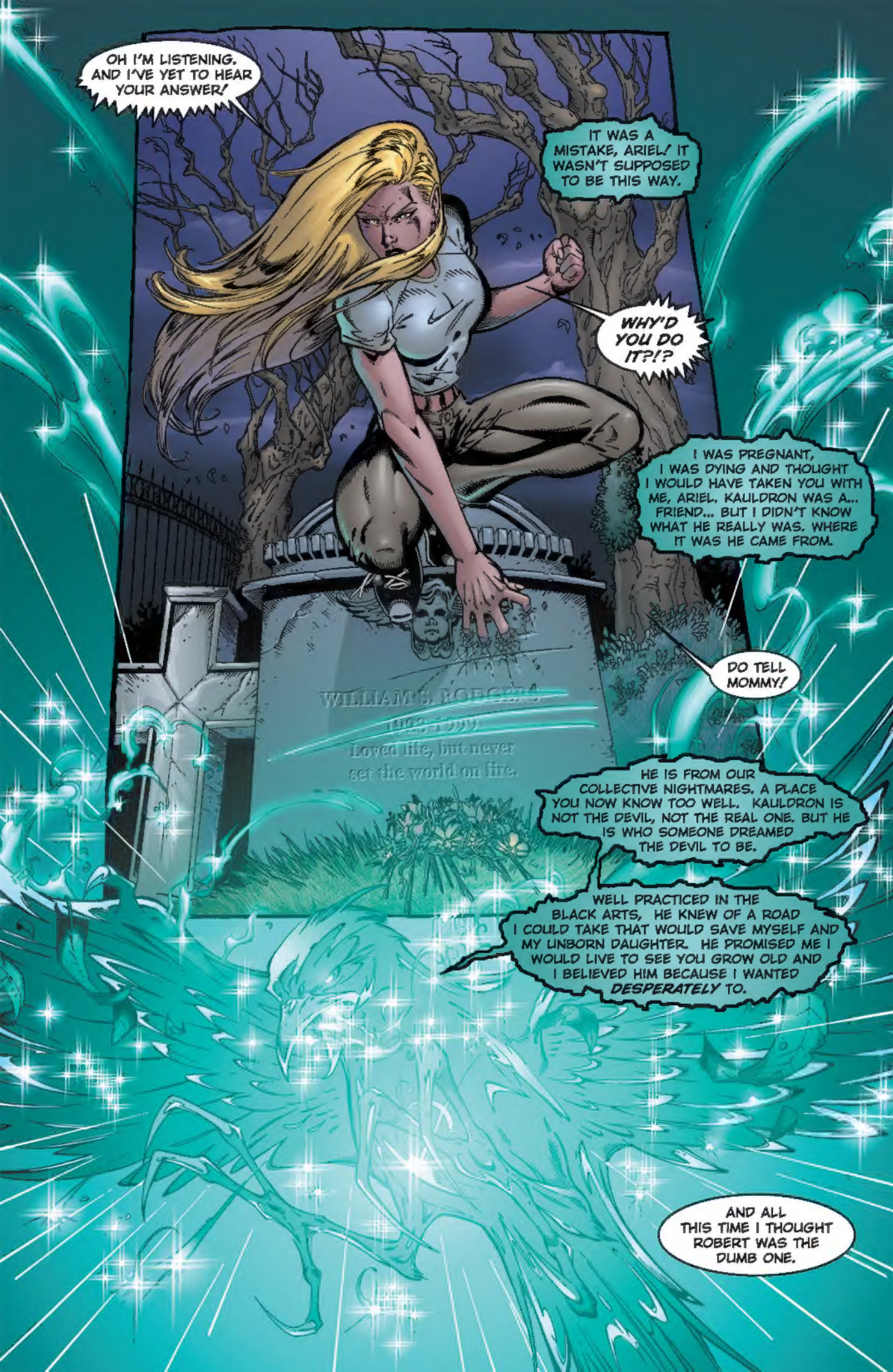
COME
HE
CARNIVAL
THIS WEEK AT
THE MEMPHIS
FAIRGROUNDS
BAD DREAM
GREAT.
NOW IT'S CONTAGIOUS.
HEY'D YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

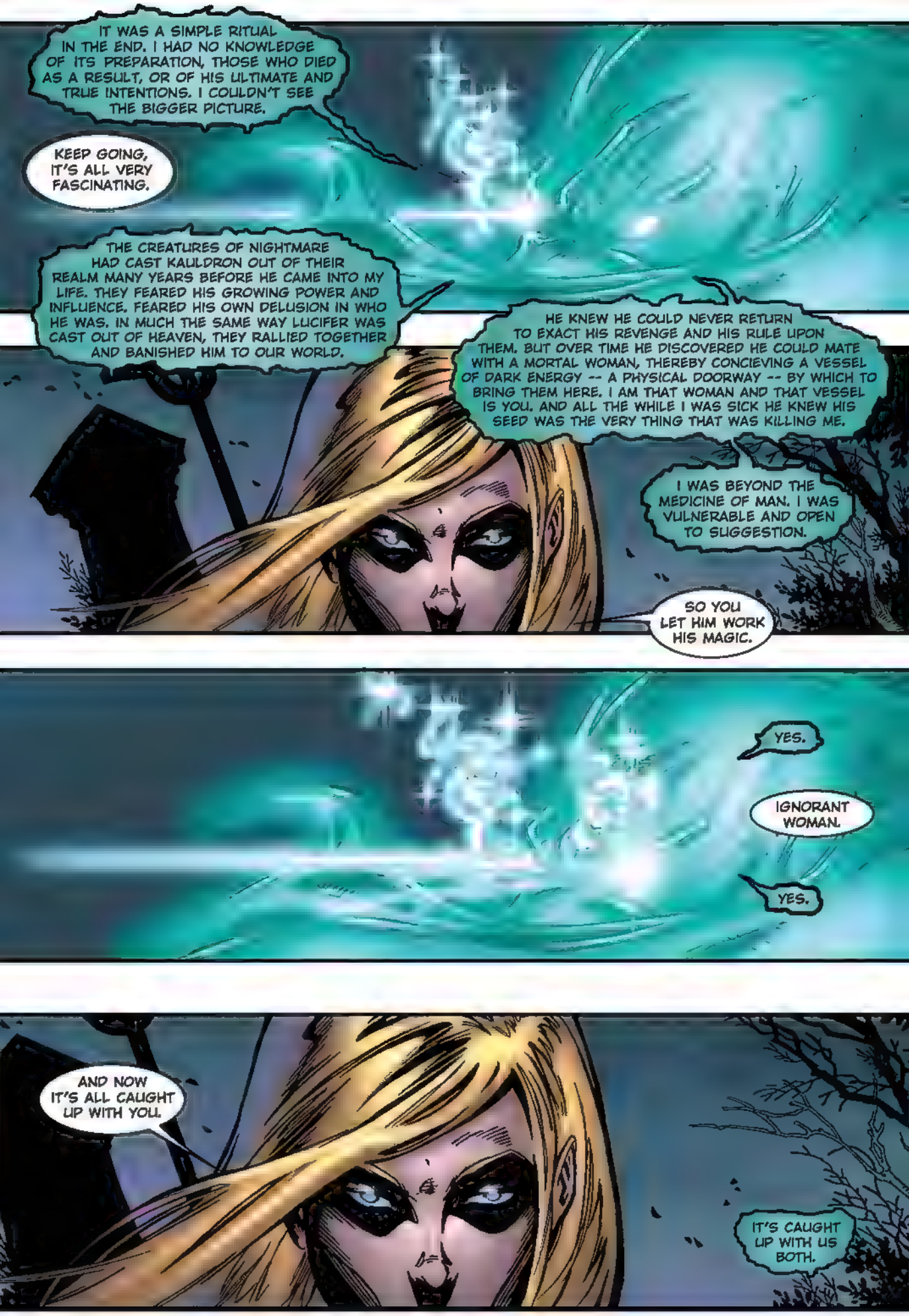

SOMEWHERE ELSE:
YOU'RE WORLD CAN CHANGE IN A DAY.
IN AN HOUR.
IN A HEARTBEAT.
THE CHOICES WE MAKE ARE EVERYTHING, AND SOMETIMES...
...SOMETIMES THE CHOICES OTHERS MAKE ARE EVEN MORE.
THERE IS AN OLD CHINESE PROVERB WHICH SAYS THE WORLD DOES NOT GO UNAFFECTED BY EVEN THE SMALLEST OF BUTTERFLIES FLAPPING ITS WINGS. CAUSE AND EFFECT.
SOME EFFECTS ARE UNNOTICEABLE, OF LITTLE OR NO CONSEQUENCE. BUT SOME WILL RIPPLE THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE, SWEEPING AWAY AND FOREVER ALTERING EVERYTHING THAT THEY COME IN CONTACT WITH.
YOU TAUGHT ME MANY THINGS MOTHER, THIS MOST OF ALL.
AND I COULDN'T HATE YOU FOR IT MORE.
IT WASN'T FATE, AFTER ALL.
IT WASN'T EVIL.
IT WASN'T DESTINY. IT HAD NOTHING DO TO WITH RHYME OR ANYTHING RESEMBLING REASON. YOU STUPID, DESPERATE WOMAN.
IT WAS JUST YOU.


I KNOW YOU'RE HERE.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE BUT I CAN FEEL YOU WATCHING ME.
WAITING FOR JUST THE RIGHT TIME TO MAKE YOUR PRESENCE KNOWN...
...ISN'T THAT RIGHT MOTHER?
I'VE COME TO WARN YOU ARIEL.

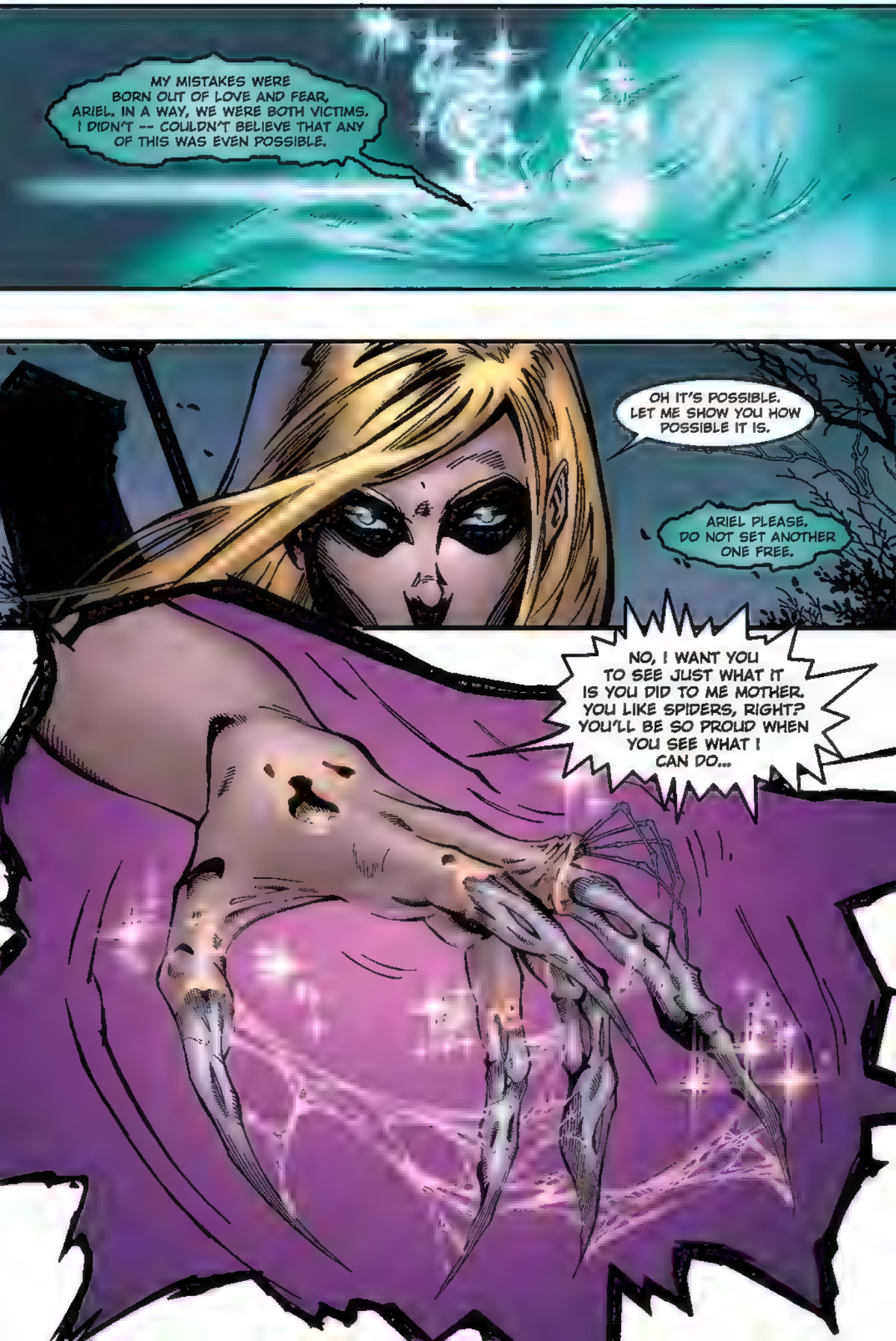
I JUST WANT TO KNOW THE ANSWER TO ONE THING. WHY'D YOU DO IT?!?
A DARK AND TERRIBLE DANGER IS CLOSE... IT IS ALMOST UPON YOU.
FIGURED IT OUT ON MY OWN. WAS A LITTLE KID THAT KILLED OTHER LITTLE KIDS TO STAY YOUNG FOREVER. I TOOK CARE OF IT.* NOW ANSWER THE QUESTION!
A MUCH GREATER THREAT IS NEAR.
*SEE THE LEGACY AND REDEMPTION BOOKS!

GREATER THAN YOU?!?
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY CAUSE MORE DAMAGE THAN WHAT YOU DID?!? WHY'D YOU DO IT???
SLAM!!!
ARIEL, SOMETHING IS COMING FOR YOU!
YOU AREN'T LISTENING!!

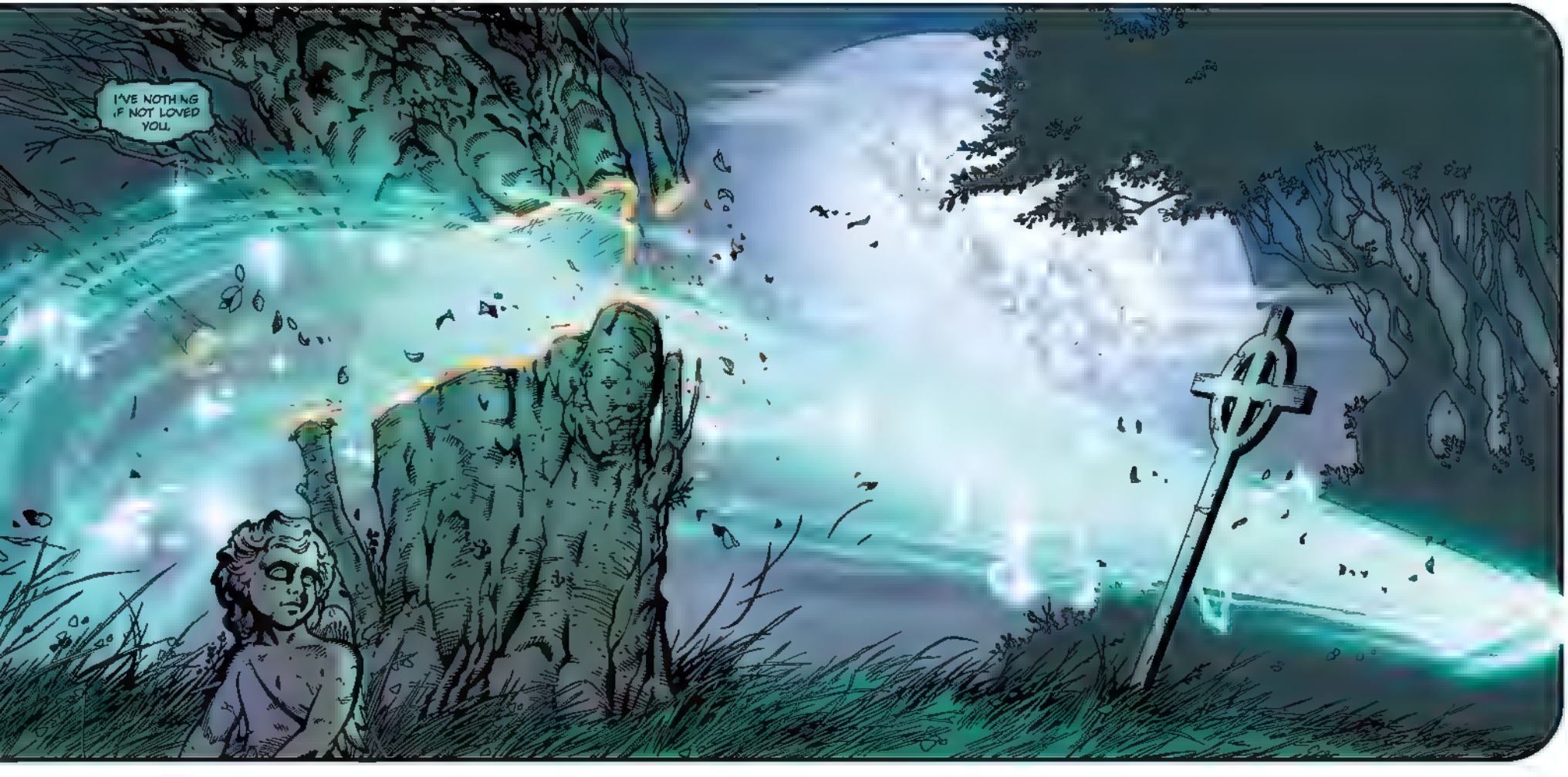

OH I'M LISTENING. AND I'VE YET TO HEAR YOUR ANSWER!
IT WAS A MISTAKE, ARIEL! IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY.
WHY'D YOU DO IT?!?
I WAS PREGNANT, I WAS DYING AND THOUGHT I WOULD HAVE TAKEN YOU WITH ME, ARIEL. KAULDRON WAS A... FRIEND... BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HE REALLY WAS. WHERE IT WAS HE CAME FROM.
DO TELL MOMMY!
Loved life, but never set the world on fire.
HE IS FROM OUR COLLECTIVE NIGHTMARES. A PLACE YOU NOW KNOW TOO WELL. KAULDRON IS NOT THE DEVIL, NOT THE REAL ONE. BUT HE IS WHO SOMEONE DREAMED THE DEVIL TO BE.
WELL PRACTICED IN THE BLACK ARTS, HE KNEW OF A ROAD I COULD TAKE THAT WOULD SAVE MYSELF AND MY UNBORN DAUGHTER. HE PROMISED ME I WOULD LIVE TO SEE YOU GROW OLD AND I BELIEVED HIM BECAUSE I WANTED DESPERATELY TO.
AND ALL THIS TIME I THOUGHT ROBERT WAS THE DUMB ONE.


IT WAS A SIMPLE RITUAL IN THE END. I HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF ITS PREPARATION, THOSE WHO DIED AS A RESULT, OR OF HIS ULTIMATE AND TRUE INTENTIONS. I COULDN'T SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE.
KEEP GOING, IT'S ALL VERY FASCINATING.
THE CREATURES OF NIGHTMARE HAD CAST KAULDRON OUT OF THEIR REALM MANY YEARS BEFORE HE CAME INTO MY LIFE. THEY FEARED HIS GROWING POWER AND INFLUENCE. FEARED HIS OWN DELUSION IN WHO HE WAS. IN MUCH THE SAME WAY LUCIFER WAS CAST OUT OF HEAVEN, THEY RALLIED TOGETHER AND BANISHED HIM TO OUR WORLD.
HE KNEW HE COULD NEVER RETURN TO EXACT HIS REVENGE AND HIS RULE UPON THEM. BUT OVER TIME HE DISCOVERED HE COULD MATE WITH A MORTAL WOMAN, THEREBY CONCIEVING A VESSEL OF DARK ENERGY -- A PHYSICAL DOORWAY -- BY WHICH TO BRING THEM HERE. I AM THAT WOMAN AND THAT VESSEL IS YOU. AND ALL THE WHILE I WAS SICK HE KNEW HIS SEED WAS THE VERY THING THAT WAS KILLING ME.
I WAS BEYOND THE MEDICINE OF MAN. I WAS VULNERABLE AND OPEN TO SUGGESTION.
SO YOU LET HIM WORK HIS MAGIC.
YES.
IGNORANT WOMAN.
YES.
AND NOW IT'S ALL CAUGHT UP WITH YOU.
IT'S CAUGHT UP WITH US BOTH.

NO, SEE I'M STILL ALIVE!! I'VE STEERED CLEAR OF THE EASY FIXES AND I'M STILL LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS! YOU'RE THE *GHOST*, MOTHER, NOT ME!
ONCE I REALIZED WHAT WAS COMING I THOUGHT MY SPIRIT WOULD BE BETTER SERVED WATCHING OVER YOU.
YOUR JUDGEMENT ISN'T SOMETHING I PLACE ANY STOCK IN!! NOT ANYMORE!


MY MISTAKES WERE BORN OUT OF LOVE AND FEAR, ARIEL. IN A WAY, WE WERE BOTH VICTIMS. I DIDN'T -- COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT ANY OF THIS WAS EVEN POSSIBLE.
OH IT'S POSSIBLE. LET ME SHOW YOU HOW POSSIBLE IT IS.
ARIEL PLEASE. DO NOT SET ANOTHER ONE FREE.
NO, I WANT YOU TO SEE JUST WHAT IT IS YOU DID TO ME MOTHER. YOU LIKE SPIDERS, RIGHT? YOU'LL BE SO PROUD WHEN YOU SEE WHAT I CAN DO...

...WHAT I'VE BECOME!
ARIE... NO!!!!
LOOK AT ME MOTHER AND KNOW THAT IT'S BECAUSE OF YOU!!! YOU DID THIS TO ME!! TAKE A GOOD LOOK!!!
I'M SO VERY SORRY, ARIEL.

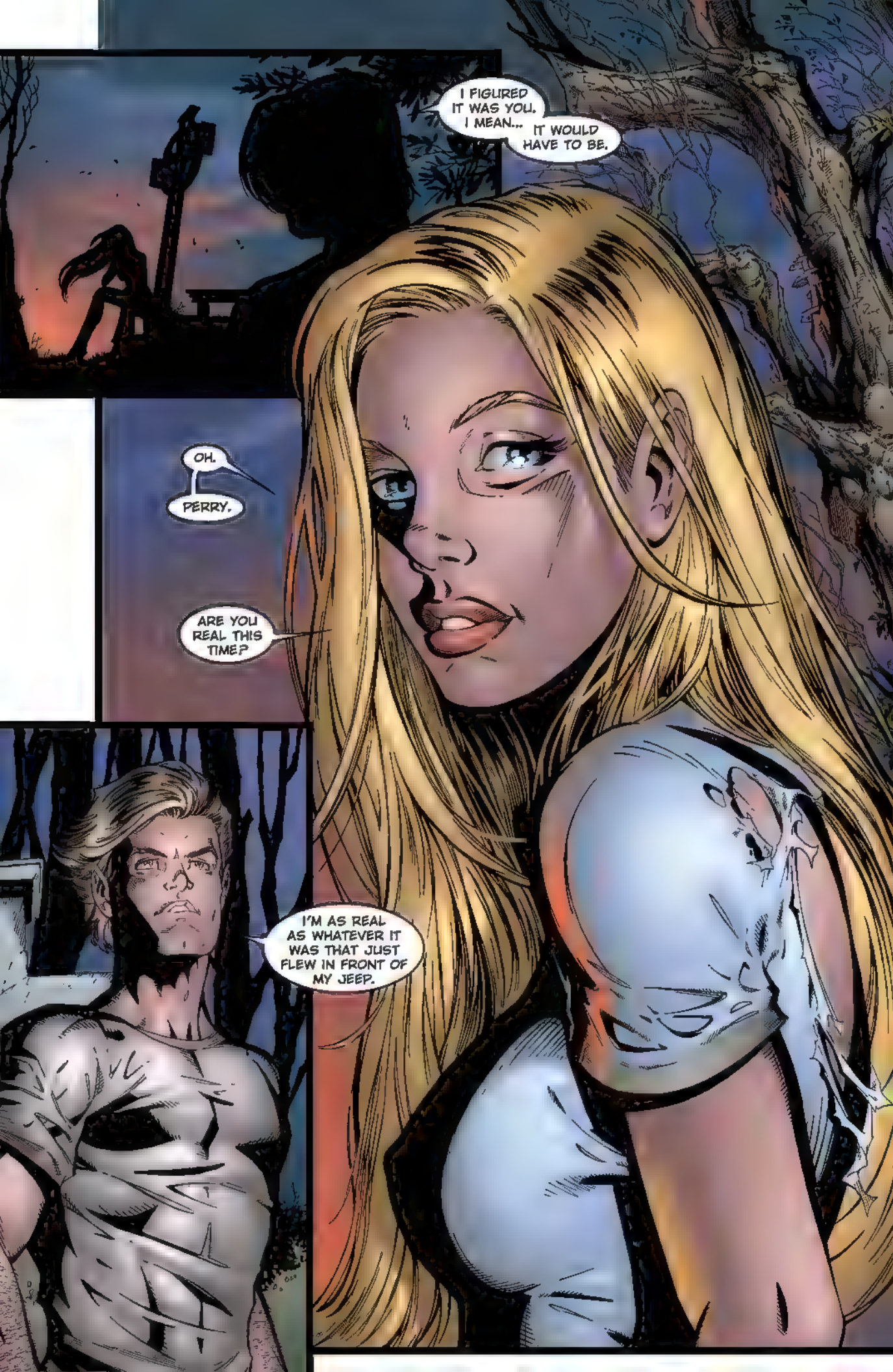

I'VE NOTH NG
IF NOT LOVED
YOU.

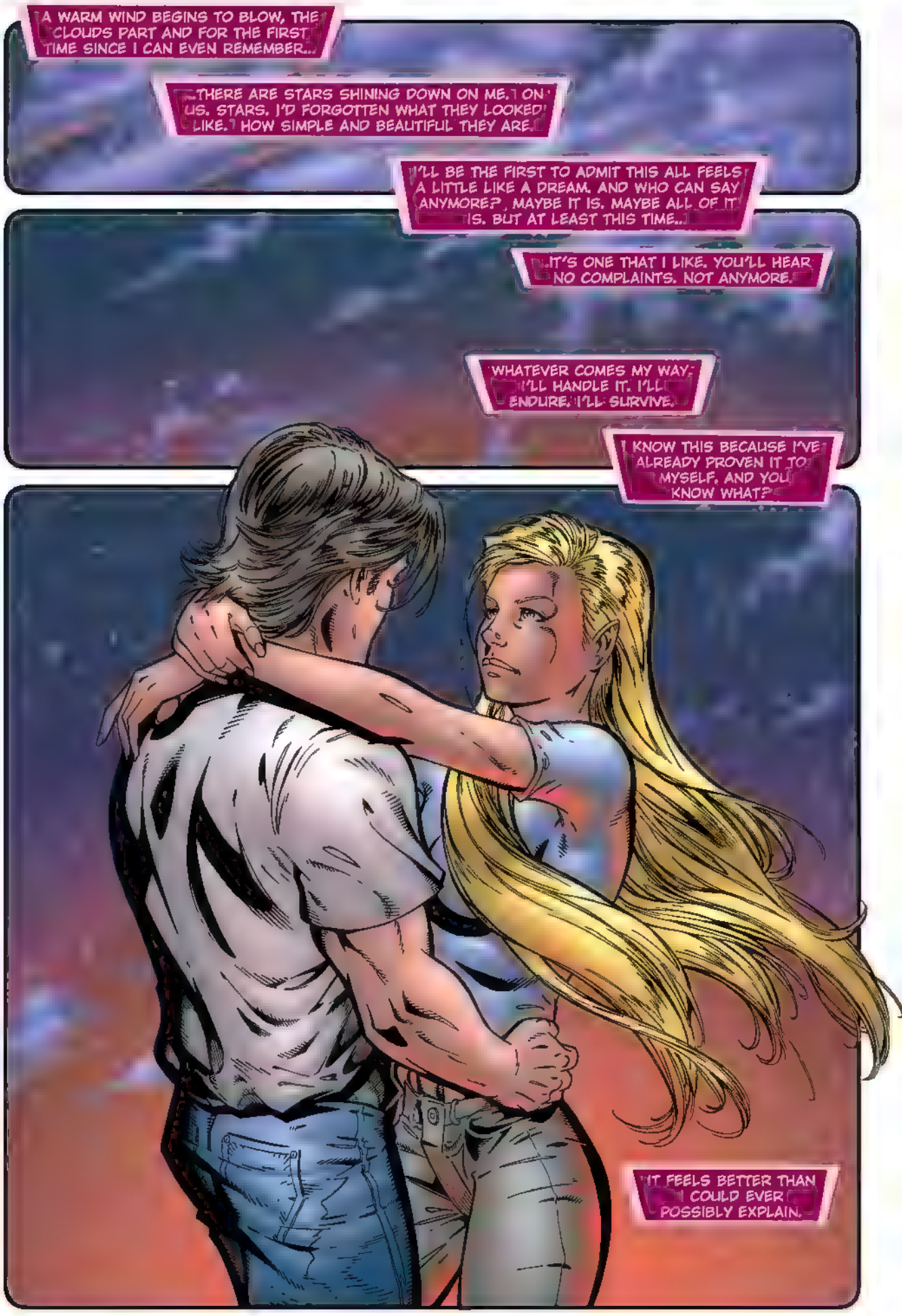
SCREEEEEE!!!
GEEE--ZUS!!
NOT EVEN HOME YET AND IT'S ALREADY STARTING.

HE KNOWS BETTER.
HONEST TO GOD HE KNOWS BETTER.
BUT THE DUMMY DOES IT ANYWAY.

SEVEN MILES SOUTHEAST OF ARIEL'S POSITION.
THIS IS WHAT WE HOPED FOR, RIGHT? I MEAN, THIS QUALIFIES.
I HAVEN'T WET MYSELF I BELIEVE SINCE I WAS 5. DON'T CARE FOR HOW IT MAKES ME FEEL AT 30.
YEAH, WELL I'M RIGHT THERE WITH YA. 'CEPT FOR THE PEEING PART. HERE I THOUGHT NUTHIN' COULD CREEP ME OUT ANYMORE -- ULLMAN YOU GETTING THIS?
HARD TO MAKE OUT. WHADDAYA GOT?
IT SORTA DEFIES DESCRIPTION.
TRY MOVIN' YER MOUTH AND SEE WHAT COMES OUT. WE PAY YOU FOR IT.
LOOKS LIKE THE BIG FISH GOTTAHOLDA THE LITTLE FISH... ONLY THIS FISH AIN'T EXACTLY LITTLE. AND ULLMAN?
I'M FREAKED. I DON'T GET FREAKED.
ALL IT MEANS'S YER GETTIN' CLOSER. THIS IS WHAT WE WANTED. WHAT WE'VE BEEN LOOKIN' FOR.
WELL AND GOOD, AND I UNDERSTAND ALL THAT...

...BUT YER NOT STANDING IN FRONT OF WHAT I AM.


I FIGURED IT WAS YOU. I MEAN... IT WOULD HAVE TO BE.
OH. PERRY.
ARE YOU REAL THIS TIME?
I'M AS REAL AS WHATEVER IT WAS THAT JUST FLEW IN FRONT OF MY JEEP.


A WARM WIND BEGINS TO BLOW, THE CLOUDS PART AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE I CAN EVEN REMEMBER...
...THERE ARE STARS SHINING DOWN ON ME. ON US. STARS. I'D FORGOTTEN WHAT THEY LOOKED LIKE. HOW SIMPLE AND BEAUTIFUL THEY ARE.
I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THIS ALL FEELS A LITTLE LIKE A DREAM. AND WHO CAN SAY ANYMORE?, MAYBE IT IS. MAYBE ALL OF IT IS. BUT AT LEAST THIS TIME...
...IT'S ONE THAT I LIKE. YOU'LL HEAR NO COMPLAINTS. NOT ANYMORE.
WHATEVER COMES MY WAY. I'LL HANDLE IT. I'LL ENDURE. I'LL SURVIVE.
I KNOW THIS BECAUSE I'VE ALREADY PROVEN IT TO MYSELF, AND YOU KNOW WHAT?
IT FEELS BETTER THAN I COULD EVER POSSIBLY EXPLAIN.

YOU HAVE TO ADMIT IT'S KIND OF SWEET.
THAT FOOL'S TIMING COULDN'T BE MORE PERFECT. HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT HE JUST WALKED INTO.
LOOK, WE'VE GOT HER DEAD TO RIGHTS. LET HER HAVE THIS MOMENT. THERE'LL BE ANOTHER TIME.
WHY THE SUDDEN RESERVATION?
I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR HER.
I DON'T KNOW, JESSICA...

...I'M NOT SURE THIS CAN WAIT.
EAT ME